RAMANAMA

BY

M. K. GANDHI

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
27 SEP 1955
T. KALLUPATTI

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Readers of the *Harijan* are aware that in later years Gandhiji had come to believe that Ramanama was not only an effective aid in controlling the mind but was also an infallible remedy for most of the ills of the body. His writings about Ramanama therefore assumed a deeper significance during these years.

Owing to the enthusiasm of a votary of Ramanama we have been able to issue a second edition of the book sooner than expected. While issuing this second edition we have therefore taken the opportunity to add some later writings on Ramanama by Gandhiji to the original selection and have also added a chapter from Manubehn Gandhi's book — *Bapu—My Mother*. The chapter though forming part of Manubehn's diary is in fact a report of Gandhiji's devotion to Ramanama almost in his own words. We trust the additions will please all lovers of Gandhiji's writings on Ramanama.

3-9-'49

EDITOR'S NOTE

Gandhiji had been taught as a child to take Ramanama, i.e., the Name of Rama or God, when in trouble. As a Satyagrahi, or one who holds fast to Truth or God all the twentyfour hours of the day, Gandhiji discovered that God was his constant solace and support in every difficulty — physical, mental or spiritual. One of his earliest trials was in connection with the practice of *brahmacharya* or chastity. He tells us that Ramanama was his greatest help in resisting impure thought. Ramanama saw him through the agony of his fasts, and through all the lonely struggles of soul, which fell to his lot as a pioneer in the political, social, economic and religious spheres. But his last discovery, as he threw himself more and more on God was that Ramanama was a remedy also for physical ailments.

In his quest for Truth and eagerness to relieve human suffering, Gandhiji had long discovered simple, inexpensive methods of treating disease through fresh air, massage, baths, fasts, diet, earth-bandages and such like. These methods, he believed, were according to Nature, or in conformity with the laws of God, rather than the innumerable drugs manufactured today on a commercial scale, which, he held, had in the end a harmful effect on the human system.

But man being more than body, mere physical treatment of his ailments, Gandhiji was convinced, was not enough. The patient's mind and soul required to be treated also. When these were whole, the body of itself became whole. Gandhiji found that towards this end nothing was so efficacious as Ramanama, or a devout faith in, and reliance on, the Great Physician. When a man put himself completely in God's hands, lived according to God's laws in respect of food, personal hygiene, control of passions in particular and of self in general, and in respect

of his relationships with his fellow men, Gandhiji was certain that he would be free from disease. It was ever towards such a state that he was himself striving, and to help others towards the same end he established the last of his institutions, the Nature Cure Clinic at Uruli Kanchan, where besides Nature Cure as practised by himself, the patients would be taught the efficacy of Ramanama. This little book seeks to put briefly before the reader Gandhiji's thoughts and experience in this regard in his own words.

Bombay **Bharatan Kumarappa**

NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH MEANINGS

Akash (aakaasha) : sky ; ether
Ayurveda (aayurveda) : the science of Hindu medicine
Bhajan (bhajana) : a religious song
Brahmacharya : continence
Chopai (chopaai) : a quatrain
Dharalas (dhaaraalaas) : a criminal tribe of Gujarat
Diwali (divaalee) : a Hindu festival of illuminations
Doha (dohaa) : a couplet
Dwadasha Mantra (dwaadasha mantra) : a sacred incantation of twelve letters
Gajendra : a master elephant
Graha (graaha) : an alligator
Hakim (hakeema) : a physician
Haveli (havelee) : a Vaishnava temple
Jantar Mantar : charms
Japa : repetition of a sacred name
Kalma (kalamaa) : a Muslim formula of prayer or incantation
Krishna : a Hindu man-god
Mahadeva (mahaadeva) : a Hindu god
Mantra : a sacred incantation for repetition or meditation
Pancha Mahabhutas (pancha mahaabhootas) : five elements
Pooja (poojaa) : worship
Rama (raama) : the hero of the Ramayana ; God
Ramabana (raamabaana) : an arrow of Rama ; an infallible cure
Ramadhun (raamadhoona) : chanting the name of Rama
Ramarajya (raamaraajya) : Kingdom of Rama i.e. God
Ramayana (raamaayana) : a Hindu epic
Shloka : a verse
Sthitapragnya : a steadfast man
Tejas : energizing principle
Upanishad : a Hindu philosophical book of old
Vaidya : a physician
Vaishnava : a worshipper of Vishnu

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RAMANAMA

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
27 SEP 1955
T. KALLUPATTI

1
A GOOD SEED SOWN

From my sixth or seventh year up to my sixteenth I was at school, being taught all sorts of things except religion. I may say that I failed to get from the teachers what they could have given me without any effort on their part. And yet I kept on picking up things here and there from my surroundings. The term *religion* I am using in its broadest sense, meaning thereby self-realization or knowledge of self.

Being born in the Vaishnava faith, I had often to go to the *haveli*. But it never appealed to me. I did not like its glitter and pomp. Also I heard rumours of immorality being practised there, and lost all interest in it. Hence, I could gain nothing from the *haveli*.

But what I failed to get there I obtained from my nurse, an old servant of the family, whose affection for me I still recall. There was in me a fear of ghosts and spirits. Rambha, for that was her name, suggested, as a remedy for this fear, the repetition of Ramanama. I had more faith in her than in her remedy, and so at a tender age I began repeating Ramanama to cure my fear of ghosts and spirits. This was, of course, short-lived; but the good seed sown in childhood was not sown in vain. I think it is due to the seed sown by that good woman Rambha that today Ramanama is an infallible remedy for me.

What left a deep impression on me was the reading of the *Ramayana* before my father. During part of his illness my father was in Porbandar. There every evening he used to listen to the *Ramayana*. The reader was a great devotee of Rama — Ladha Maharaj of Bileshwar. It was said of him that he cured himself of his leprosy not by any medicine, but by applying to the affected parts

bilva leaves which had been cast away after being offered to the image of Mahadeva in Bileshwar Temple, and by the regular repetition of Ramanama. His faith, it was said, had made him whole. This may or may not be true. We, at any rate, believed the story. And it is a fact that when Ladha Maharaj began his reading of the *Ramayana* his body was entirely free from leprosy. He had a melodious voice. He would sing the *dohas* (couplets) and *chopais* (quatrains), and explain them, losing himself in the discourse and carrying his listeners along with him. I must have been thirteen at that time, but I quite remember being enraptured by his reading. That laid the foundation of my deep devotion to the *Ramayana*. Today, I regard the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas as the greatest book in all devotional literature.

From *My Experiments with Truth*

2

THE STAFF OF LIFE

My thoughts of sin are scotched, but not killed. If I had acquired perfect mastery over my thoughts, I should not have suffered from pleurisy, dysentery and appendicitis as I have during the last ten years. * I believe that when the soul is sinless, the body which she inhabits is healthy too. That is to say, as the soul progresses towards freedom from sin, the body also tends to become immune from disease. But a healthy body, in this case, does not

* I am a humble aspirant for perfection. I know my way to it also. But knowing the way is not reaching its end. If I was perfect, if I had acquired full control over all my passions even in thought, I should be perfect in body. I am free to confess that daily I am obliged to expend a great amount of mental energy in acquiring control over my thoughts. When I have succeeded, if I ever do, think what a store-house of energy would be set free for service! As I hold that appendicitis was a result of infirmity of thought or mind, so do I concede that my submission to the surgical operation was an additional infirmity of mind. If I was absolutely free of egoism, I would have resigned myself to the inevitable; but I wanted to live in the present body. Complete detachment is not a mechanical process. One has to grow into it by patient toil and prayer. — *Young India*, 3-4-1924

mean a strong body. A powerful soul lives only in a weak body. As the soul advances in strength, the body languishes. A perfectly healthy body might yet be quite emaciated. A strong body is often diseased. Even if there be no disease, such a body catches infection soon, while a perfectly healthy body enjoys complete immunity from it. Pure blood has the power of expelling all obnoxious germs....

Brahmacharya in the popular or current acceptance of the term means control of animal passion in thought, word and deed. The same stress has not been laid upon the control of the palate, and hence the control of passion has grown more difficult and almost impossible....

My experience is that one who has not mastered taste cannot control animal passion either. It is no easy task to conquer the palate. But conquest of passion is bound up with the conquest of the palate. One of the means of controlling taste is to give up spices and condiments altogether or as far as possible. Another and a more effective means is always to cultivate a feeling that we eat just in order to sustain the body and never for taste. We take in air not for taste, but for life. Just as we take water to quench our thirst, in the same way we should take food only to satisfy hunger. Unfortunately, parents make us contract a contrary habit from very childhood. They corrupt us by giving us all manner of delicacies not for our sustenance, but out of mistaken affection. We have got to fight against this unfavourable home atmosphere.

But our most powerful ally in conquering animal passion is Ramanama or some similar *mantra*. The *Dwadasha Mantra* * will also serve the same purpose. One may repeat any *mantra* one pleases. I have suggested Ramanama as I have been familiar with it since childhood, and as it is my constant support in my struggles. One must be completely absorbed in whatever *mantra* one selects. One should not mind if other thoughts disturb one during the *japa* (recitation). I am confident that one

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* ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

who still goes on with the *japa* in faith will conquer in the end. The *mantra* becomes one's staff of life and carries one through every ordeal.* One should not seek worldly profit from such sacred *mantras*. The characteristic power of these *mantras* lies in their standing guard over personal purity, and every diligent seeker will realize this at once. It should, however, be remembered that the *mantra* is not to be repeated parrot-like. One should pour one's soul into it. The parrot repeats such *mantras* mechanically, we must repeat them intelligently in the hope of driving out undesirable thoughts and with full faith in the power of the *mantras* to assist us to do so.

Navajivan, 5-6-1924

* Suggesting to a *brahmachari* the means to the attainment of *brahmacharya*, Gandhiji wrote:

"The last and not the least is prayer. Let him repeat Ramanama with all his heart regularly every day, and ask for divine grace." — *Young India*, 19-4-'26

To a struggling soul, Gandhiji wrote:

"With the help of Rama we have got to overcome the ten-headed Ravana of passions within us. Success is bound to be ours if we have faith in Rama and surrender ourselves to His grace. Above all, do not lose self-confidence. Avoid indulgence of the palate." *Young India*, 20-12-'28

"When your passions threaten to get the better of you, go down on your knees and cry out to God for help. Ramanama is my Infallible Help. As an extraneous aid, take a hip-bath." — From Preface to the Second Edition (1928) of *Self-Restraint v. Self-Indulgence*.

3

OUR ONLY HELP

Rama, Allah and God are to me convertible terms. I had discovered that simple people deluded themselves into the belief that I appeared to them in their distress. I wanted to remove the superstition. I knew that I appeared to nobody. It was pure hallucination for them to rely upon a frail mortal. I, therefore, presented them with a simple and well tried formula that has never failed, namely, to invoke the assistance of God every morning before sunrise and every evening before bed-time for the fulfilment of the vows. Millions of Hindus know Him under the name of Rama. As a child, I was taught to call upon Rama when I was seized with fear. I know many of my companions to whom Ramanama has been the great solace in the hour of their need. I presented it to the Dharalas and to the 'untouchables'. I present it also to the reader whose vision is not blurred and whose faith is not damped by over-much learning. Learning takes us through many stages in life, but it fails us utterly in the hour of danger and temptation. Then, faith alone saves. Ramanama is not for those who tempt God in every way possible and ever expect it to save. It is for those who walk in the fear of God, who want to restrain themselves and cannot in spite of themselves.

Young India, 22-1-1925

4
RAMANAMA AND NATIONAL SERVICE

Q. Can a man or woman attain self-realization by mere recitation of Ramanama and without taking part in national service? I ask this question because some of my sisters say that they do not need to do anything beyond attending to family requirements, and occasionally showing kindness to the poor.

A. This question has puzzled not only women, but many men, and has taxed me to the utmost. I know that there is a school of philosophy which teaches complete inaction and futility of all effort. I have not been able to appreciate that teaching, unless in order to secure verbal agreement I were to put my own interpretation on it. In my humble opinion, effort *is* necessary for one's own growth. It has to be irrespective of results. Ramanama or some equivalent is necessary, not for the sake of repetition, but for the sake of purification, as an aid to effort, for direct guidance from above. It is, therefore, never a substitute for effort. It is meant for intensifying and guiding it in proper channel. If all effort is vain, why family cares or an occasional help to the poor? In this very effort is contained the germ of national service. And national service, to me, means service of humanity, even as disinterested service of the family means the same thing. Disinterested service of the family, necessarily, leads one to national service. Ramanama gives one detachment and ballast, and never throws one off one's balance at critical moments. Self-realization I hold to be impossible without service of, and identification with, the poorest.

Young India, 21-10-1926

5
SEEK HIS HELP

I know from correspondence with the students all over India, what wrecks they have become by having stuffed their brains with information derived from a cart-load of books. Some have become unhinged, others have become lunatics, some have been leading a life of helpless impurity. My heart goes out to them when they say that try as much as they might, they are what they are, because they cannot overpower the devil. "Tell us," they plaintively ask, "how to get rid of the devil, how to get rid of the impurity that has seized us." When I ask them to take Ramanama and kneel before God and seek His help, they come to me and say : "We do not know where God is. We do not know what it is to pray." That is the state to which they have been reduced....

A Tamil saying has always remained in my memory, and it means : "God is the Help of the helpless." If you would ask Him to help you, you would go to Him in all your nakedness, approach Him without reservations, also without fear of doubts as to how He can help a fallen being like you. He who has helped millions who have approached Him, is He going to desert you ? He makes no exception whatsoever, and you will find that everyone of your prayers will be answered. The prayer of even the most impure will be answered.* I am telling this

Young India, 4-8-1929

* But prayer is no mere exercise of words or of the ears, it is no mere repetition of empty formula. Any amount of repetition of Ramanama is futile, if it fails to stir the soul. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words, than words without a heart. It must be in clear response to the spirit which hungers for it. And even as a hungry man relishes a hearty meal, a hungry soul will relish a heartfelt prayer. And I am giving you a bit of my experience, and that of my companions, when I say that he who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together, but not a single moment without prayer. For, without prayer there is no inward peace. — *Young India*, 23-1-1930

out of my personal experience. I have gone through the purgatory. Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything will be added unto you.

6

BEAUTY OF REPETITION

"This repetition of one and the same thing over and over again jars on me. It may be the defect of my rationalist mathematical temperament. But somehow I cannot like the repetition. For instance, even Bach's wonderful music fails to appeal to me when the text 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,' is repeated over and over again."

"But even in mathematics, you have your recurring decimals," said Gandhiji smiling.

"But each recurs with a definite new fact," said the mathematician.

"Even so," said Gandhiji, "each repetition, or *japa* as it is called, has a new meaning, each repetition carries you nearer and nearer to God This is a concrete fact, and I may tell you that you are here talking to no theorist, but to one who has experienced what he says every minute of his life, so much so that it is easier for the life to stop than for this incessant process to stop. It is a definite need of the soul."

"I quite see it, but for the average man it becomes an empty formula."

"I agree, but the best thing is liable to be abused. There is room for any amount of hypocrisy, but even hypocrisy is an ode to virtue. And I know that for ten thousand hypocrites, you would find millions of simple souls who find their solace from it. It is like scaffolding quite essential to a building."

"But," said Pierre Ceresole, "if I may carry the simile a little further, you agree that the scaffolding has to be removed when the building is complete?"

"Yes, it would be removed when this body is removed."

"Why?"

"Because," said Wilkinson who was closely following the discourse, "we are eternally building."

"Because," said Gandhiji, "we are eternally striving after perfection. God alone is perfect, man is never perfect."

Harijan, 25-5-1935

7
SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

To a question by a Missionary friend whether he followed any spiritual practices, Gandhiji said:

"I am a stranger to yogic practices. The practice I follow is a practice I learnt in my childhood from my nurse. I was afraid of ghosts. She used to say to me: 'There are no ghosts, but if you are afraid, repeat Ramanama.' What I learnt in my childhood has become a huge thing in my mental firmament. It is a sun that has brightened my darkest hour. A Christian may find the same solace from the repetition of the name of Jesus, and a Muslim from the name of Allah.* All these things have the same implications and they produce identical results under identical circumstances. Only the repetition must not be a lip expression, but part of your very being."

Harijan, 5-12-1936

* The Allah of Islam is the same as the God of Christians and Ishwara of Hindus. Even as there are numerous names of God in Hinduism, there are many names of God in Islam. The names do not indicate individuality but attributes; and little man has tried in his humble way to describe mighty God by giving Him attributes, though He is above all attributes, Indescribable, Immeasurable. —*Harijan*, 12-8-1938

8

A SURE AID

There is no doubt that Ramanama is the surest aid. If recited from the heart, it charms away every evil thought; and evil thought gone, no corresponding action is possible. The outward helps are all useless if the mind is weak. They are superfluous if the mind is pure. This must not be taken to mean that a pure-minded man can take all the liberties and still keep safe. Such a man simply will not take any liberties with himself. His whole life will be an infallible testimony to the inward purity. The *Gita* truly says that mind makes the man and unmakes him. Milton paraphrases the same thought when he says: "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven."

Harijan, 12-5-1946

9

RIDICULING RAMANAMA

Q. The Ramanama Bank in Banaras and wearing clothes printed with Ramanama, is, in my opinion, a caricature and even insult of Ramanama. Don't you think that under these circumstances your telling the people to take to Ramanama as a sovereign remedy for all ailments is likely to encourage ignorance and hypocrisy? Ramanama repeated from the heart can be a sovereign remedy, but, in my opinion, religious education of the right type alone can lead to that state.

A. You are right. There is so much superstition and hypocrisy around that one is afraid even to do the right thing. But if one gives way to fear, even truth will have to be suppressed. The golden rule is to act fearlessly upon what one believes to be right. Hypocrisy and untruth will go on in the world. Our doing the right thing

will result in their decrease, if any, never in their increase. The danger is that when we are surrounded by falsehood on all sides, we might be caught in it and begin to deceive ourselves. We should be careful not to make a mistake out of our laziness and ignorance. Constant vigilance under all circumstances is essential. A votary of truth cannot act otherwise. Even an all-powerful remedy like Ramanama can become useless for lack of wakefulness and care, and become one more addition to the numerous current superstitions.

Harijan, 2-6-1946

10

RAMANAMA AND CHARMS

There is no connection between Ramanama of my conception and *jantar mantar* (charms). I have said that to take Ramanama from the heart means deriving help from an incomparable power. The atom bomb is as nothing compared with it. This power is capable of removing all pain. It must, however, be admitted that it is easy to say that Ramanama must come from the heart, but to attain the reality is very difficult. Nevertheless, it is the biggest thing man can possess.

Harijan, 13-10-1946

11
MY RAMA

To the question how non-Hindus could take part in Ramadhun Gandhiji replied :

" I laugh within myself when someone objects that Rama or the chanting of Ramanama is for Hindus only, how can Mussulmans, therefore, take part in it ? Is there one God for the Mussulmans and another for the Hindus, Parsis or Christians ? No, there is only one omnipotent, and omnipresent God. He is named variously and we remember Him by the name which is most familiar to us.

" My Rama, the Rama of our prayers, is not the historical Rama, the son of Dasharatha — the King of Ayodhya. He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without a second. Him alone I worship, His aid alone I seek, and so should you.* He belongs equally to all. I, therefore, see no reason why a Mussulman or anybody should object to taking His name. But he is in no way bound to recognize God as Rama. He may utter to himself Allah or Khuda so as not to mar the harmony of the sound.

Harijan, 28-4-1946

* You may say you do not believe in Him. You do not know that but for His will you could not draw a single breath. Call Him Ishwara, Allah, God, Ahura Mazda. His names are as innumerable as there are men. He is one without a second. He alone is great. There is none greater than He. He is timeless, formless, stainless. Such is my Rama. He alone is my Lord and Master.—*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

12
WHO IS RAMA ?

Q. You have often said that when you talk of Rama you refer to the Ruler of the Universe and not to Rama, the son of Dasharatha. But we find that your Ramadhun calls on 'Sita-Rama', 'Raja Rama' and it ends with 'Victory to Rama, the Lord of Sita'. Who is this Rama if not the son of the King Dasharatha?

A. In Ramadhun 'Raja Rama', 'Sita-Rama', are undoubtedly repeated. But more potent than Rama is the Name. Hindu *dharma* is like a boundless ocean teeming with priceless gems. The deeper you dive, the more treasures you find. In Hindu religion, God is known by various names. Thousands of people look doubtless upon Rama and Krishna as historical figures and literally believe that God came down in person on earth in the form of Rama, the son of Dasharatha, and by worshipping him one can attain salvation. The same thing holds good about Krishna. History, imagination and truth have got so inextricably mixed up. It is next to impossible to disentangle them. I have accepted all the names and forms attributed to God as symbols connoting one formless, omnipresent Rama. To me, therefore, Rama described as the Lord of Sita, son of Dasharatha, is the all-powerful essence whose name inscribed in the heart removes all suffering — mental, moral and physical.

Harijan, 2-6-1946

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
27 SEP 1955
T. KALLUPATTI

13

RAMA — THE SON OF DASHARATHA

An Arya Samajist writes :

" How can the Rama whom you believe to be immortal, be Rama, the son of Dasharatha and the husband of Sita ? I often attend your prayer gathering with this dilemma always confronting me and because of it, I am unable to join in the Ramadhun. This hurts me, for you are right when you say that *all* should take part in it. Cannot you make the Ramadhun such that all can join in the recital ? "

I have already explained what I mean by *all.* It applies to all those who can join in it from the heart and recite it in tune. The others should remain silent. But this is a small matter. The important question is as to how Rama, the son of Dasharatha, can be deemed immortal. This question was raised by Saint Tulsidas himself and answered by him. The answer cannot in reality be reasoned out. It does not lend itself to intellectual satisfaction. It is a matter of heart speaking to heart. I worshipped Rama as Sita's husband in the first instance, but as my knowledge and experience of Him grew, my Rama became immortal and omnipresent. This does not mean that Rama ceased to be Sita's husband ; but the meaning of Sita's husband expanded with the vision of Rama. This is how the world evolves. Rama cannot become omnipresent for the man who regards him merely as the son of Dasharatha. But for the believer in Rama as God, the father of the omnipresent Rama also becomes omnipresent — the father and son become one. It may be said that this is all a matter of imagination. " To each man according to his faith," is all that I can say. If all religions are one at source, we have to synthesize them. Today, they are looked upon as separate and that is why we kill each other. When we are tired of religion, we become atheists and then, apart from the little self, nothing, not even God, exists. But when we acquire true understanding, the little self perishes and God becomes all in all. Rama, then, is and is not the son of Dasharatha,

the husband of Sita, the brother of Bharata and Lakshmana and yet is God, the unborn and eternal. All honour, then, to those who not believing in Rama as the son of Dasharatha still come to join in the collective prayers. This matter of Rama is one which transcends reason. I have merely tried to give to the reader my belief for what it is worth.

Harijan, 22-9-1946

14
WHO AND WHERE IS GOD ?

God is not a person. To affirm that He descends to earth every now and again in the form of a human being is a partial truth which merely signifies that such a person lives near to God. Inasmuch as God is omnipresent, He dwells within every human being and all may, therefore, be said to be incarnations of Him. But this leads us nowhere. Rama, Krishna, etc., are called incarnations of God because we attribute divine qualities to them. In truth they are creations of man's imagination. Whether they actually lived or not does not affect the picture of them in men's minds. The Rama and Krishna of history often present difficulties which have to be overcome by all manner of arguments.

The truth is that God is the force. He is the essence of life. He is pure and undefiled consciousness. He is eternal. And yet, strangely enough, all are not able to derive either benefit from or shelter in the all-pervading living presence.

Electricity is a powerful force. Not all can benefit from it. It can only be produced by following certain laws. It is a lifeless force. Man can utilize it if he labours hard enough to acquire the knowledge of its laws.

The living force which we call God can similarly be found if we know and follow His law leading to the discovery of Him in us. But it is self-evident that to find out God's law requires far harder labour. The law may,

in one word, be termed *brahmacharya*. The straight way to cultivate *brahmacharya* is Ramanama. I can say this from experience. Devotees and sages like Tulsidas have shown us this royal path. No one need give undue importance to my own experience. Perhaps I am right in saying that the potency of Ramanama was brought vividly home to me in Uruli Kanchan. It was there that I asserted that the surest remedy for all our ills was Ramanama. He who can make full use of it can show powerful results with very little outside effort.

Following this line of thought I can say with conviction that the orthodox aids to *brahmacharya* pale into insignificance before Ramanama, when this name is enthroned in the heart. Then and then only do we realize its transcendent beauty and power.

Harijan, 22-6-1947

15

RAMANAMA AND NATURE CURE

My conception of Nature Cure, like everything else, has undergone a progressive evolution. And for years I have believed that if a person is filled with the presence of God and has thus attained the state of dispassion, he can surmount handicaps against long life. I have come to the conclusion, based on observation and scriptural reading, that when a man comes to that complete living faith in the Unseen Power and has become free from passion, the body undergoes internal transformation. This does not come about by mere wish. It needs constant vigilance and practice. In spite of both, unless God's grace descends upon one, human effort comes to naught.

Press Report, 12-6-1945

16
NATURE CURE TREATMENT

Nature Cure treatment means that treatment which befits man. By "man" is meant not merely man as animal, but as creature possessing, in addition to his body, both mind and soul. For such a being Ramanama is the truest Nature Cure treatment. It is an unfailing remedy. The expression Ramabana or infallible cure is derived from it. Nature, too, indicates that for man it is the worthy remedy. No matter what the ailment from which a man may be suffering, recitation of Ramanama from the heart is the sure cure. God has many names. Each person can choose the name that appeals most to him. Ishwara, Allah, Khuda, God mean the same. But the recitation must not be parrot-like, it must be born of faith of which endeavour will be some evidence. What should the endeavour consist of? Man should seek out and be content to confine the means of cure to the five elements of which the body is composed, i. e., earth, water, *akash*, sun and air. Of course, Ramanama must be the invariable accompaniment. If in spite of this, death supervenes, we may not mind. On the contrary, it should be welcomed. Science has not so far discovered any recipe for making the body immortal. Immortality is an attribute of the soul. That is certainly imperishable, but it is man's duty to try to express its purity.

If we accept the above reasoning, it will automatically limit the means permissible under Nature Cure. And man is thereby saved from all the paraphernalia of big hospitals and eminent doctors etc. The large majority of persons in the world can never afford these. Why, then, should the few desire what the many cannot have?

Harijan, 3-3-1946

17

RAMANAMA — THE INFALLIBLE REMEDY

Shri Ganeshshastri Joshi, *Vaidya*, tells me after reading my article on Nature Cure in the *Harijan* of 3rd March, 1946, that in *Ayurveda*, too, there is ample testimony to the efficacy of Ramanama as a cure for all disease. Nature Cure occupies the place of honour and in it Ramanama is the most important. When Charaka, Vagbhata and other giants of medicine in ancient India wrote, the popular name for God was not Rama but Vishnu. I myself have been a devotee of Tulsidas from my childhood and have, therefore, always worshipped God as Rama. But I know that if, beginning with *Omkar*, one goes through the entire gamut of God's names current in all climes, all countries and all languages, the result is the same. He and His Law are one. To observe His Law is, therefore, the best form of worship. A man who becomes one with the Law does not stand in need of vocal recitation of the name. In other words, an individual with whom contemplation on God has become as natural as breathing is so filled with God's spirit that knowledge or observance of the Law becomes second nature, as it were, with him. Such an one needs no other treatment.

The question, then, arises as to why, in spite of having this prince of remedies at hand, we know so little about it; and why even those who know, do not remember Him or remember Him only by lip service, not from the heart. Parrot-like repetition of God's name signifies failure to recognize Him as the panacea for all ills.

How can they? This sovereign remedy is not administered by doctors, *vaidyas, hakims* or any other medicinal practitioners. These have no faith in it. If they were to admit that the spring of the Holy Ganges could be found in every home, their very occupation or means of livelihood would go. Therefore, they must perforce rely on their powders and potions as infallible remedies.

Not only do these provide bread for the doctor, but the patient, too, seems to feel immediate relief. If a medical practitioner can get a few persons to say: "So and so gave me a powder and I was cured," his business is established.

Nor, it must be borne in mind, would it really be of any use for doctors to prescribe God's name to patients unless they themselves were conscious of its miraculous powers. Ramanama is no copy-book maxim. It is something that has to be realized through experience. One who has had personal experience alone can prescribe it, not any other.

The *Vaidyaraj* has copied out for me four verses. Out of these, Charak's is the simplest and most apt. It means that if one were to obtain mastery over even one out of the thousand names of Vishnu, all ailments would vanish:

विष्णु सहस्रमूर्धानं चराचरपतिं विभुम् ।
स्तुवन् नामसहस्रेण ज्वरान् सर्वान् व्यपोहति ॥

Harijan, 24-3-1946

18

RAMANAMA IN NATURE CURE

In the armoury of the nature curist, Ramanama is the most potent weapon. Let no one wonder at it. A noted *ayurvedic* physician told me the other day: 'All my life I have been administering drugs. But since you have prescribed Ramanama as a cure for physical ailments, it has occurred to me that what you say has, too, the authority of Vagbhata and Charaka.' The recitation of Ramanama as a remedy for spiritual ailments is as old as the hills. But the greater includes the less. And my claim is that the recitation of Ramanama is a sovereign remedy for our physical ailments also. A Nature-Cure man won't tell the patient: 'Invite me and I shall cure you of your ailment.' He will only tell about the all-healing principle that is in every being and how one can cure oneself by

evoking it and making it an active force in his life. If India could realize the power of that principle, not only would we be free but we would be a land of healthy individuals, too — not the land of epidemics and ill-health that we are today.

The potency of Ramanama is, however, subject to certain conditions and limitations. Ramanama is not like black magic. If some one suffers from surfeit and wants to be cured of its after-effects so that he can again indulge himself at the table, Ramanama is not for him. Ramanama can be used only for a good, never for an evil end, or else thieves and robbers would be the greatest devotees. Ramanama is for the pure in heart and for those who want to attain purity and remain pure. It can never be a means for self-indulgence. The remedy for surfeit is fasting, not prayer. Prayer can come in only when fasting has done its work. It can make fasting easy and bearable. Similarly, the taking of Ramanama will be a meaningless farce when at the same time you are drugging your system with medicines. A doctor who uses his talent to pander to the vices of his patient degrades himself and his patient.* What worse degradation can there be for man than that instead of regarding his body as an instrument of worshipping his Maker, he should make it the object of adoration and waste money like water to keep it going anyhow? Ramanama, on the other hand, purifies while it cures, and, therefore, it elevates. Therein lies its use as well as its limitation.

Harijan, 7-4-1946

* We want healers of souls rather than of bodies. The multiplicity of hospitals and medical men is no sign of civilization. The less we and others pamper our body, the better for us and the world. — *Young India*, 29-9-1927

19
SOVEREIGN REMEDY

"*Inter alia* you have said the following:

"'No matter what the ailment from which a man may be suffering, recitation of Ramanama from the heart is the sure cure.' (*Harijan*, 3-3-1946.)

"'Man should seek out and be content to confine the means of cure to the five elements of which the body is composed, i.e., earth, water, *akash*, sun and air.' (*Harijan*, 3-3-1946.)

"'And my claim is that the recitation of Ramanama is a sovereign remedy for our physical ailments also.' (*Harijan* 7-4-1946.)

"At first, when you introduced this new note in the system of nature cure, I thought you were merely putting in other words a kind of psycho-therapy or 'Christian Science' based on faith. These have their place in every system of medicine. I interpreted my first quotation above in that light. The second sentence quoted above is difficult to grasp. After all, it is physically impossible for medicines to be composed of anything but the five elements to which you refer, and which you say must be the sole means of cure.

"If faith is what you insist on, I have no quarrel; it is necessary for the patient to co-operate in getting well also by faith. But it is difficult to accept that faith alone would cure 'our physical ailments also'. Two years ago, my little daughter was struck by infantile paralysis; it was the most modern treatment that saved the child from becoming a cripple for life. You would agree that it would not avail to ask a two and a half year old child to recite Ramanama to be rid of infantile paralysis; and I would like to see you persuade any mother to do the recitation (and recitation alone) on her child's behalf.

"The authority from Charaka that you have quoted in the issue of March 24th, leaves me cold; *you* have taught me not to accept anything, however ancient and however authoritative it may be, if it does not appeal to my heart."

Thus writes a teacher of youth.

Ramanama has the flavour of faith-healing and Christian Science; * yet, it is quite distinct from them. Reci-

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* During Lord Lothian's talk on the last day he mentioned Christian Science and asked for Gandhiji's opinion thereon. "Since man is inseparably related to God," he said, "in proportion as he recognizes the indissoluble relationship to God, he is free from sin

tation of Ramanama is a mere symbol of the reality for which it stands. If one is knowingly filled with the presence of God within, one is that moment free from all ailment — physical, mental or moral. That we do not see the type in life is not to disprove the truth of the statement. My argument is admittedly useless for those who have no faith in God.

Christian Scientists, faith-healers and psycho-therapists may, if they will, bear witness somewhat to the truth underlying Ramanama. I cannot take the reader a long way with me through reason. How is one to prove to a person who has never tasted sugar, that sugar is sweet, except by asking him to taste it?

I must not reiterate here the conditions attendant upon the heart recitation of the sacred syllable.

The authority of Charaka is good for those who have some belief in Ramanama. Others may dismiss the authority from their consideration.

Children are irresponsible. Ramanama is undoubtedly not for them. They are helpless beings at the mercy of their parents. They show what tremendous responsibility parents bear to them and society. I have known

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and from disease. That is how faith heals. God is Truth and Health and Love."

"And He is Physician, too," said Gandhiji. "I have no quarrel with Christian Science. I accept the doctrine *in toto;* but I do not believe in many Christian Scientists. It is one thing to have an intellectual belief and another thing to have a heart-grasp of the truth. I can quite endorse the statement that all illness is sin, that when a man has even a cough it is due to sin. My blood pressure is the result of strain and overwork. But why should I have overworked myself? All overwork and hurry is sin. And I know only too well that it was perfectly possible for me to avoid all doctors. What I do not understand about Christian Scientists is that they make altogether too much of physical health and disease."

"So long as one recognizes that disease is sin, it is all right," said Lord Lothian. "Even the *Gita* says that one has to renounce the fruit of the five senses which is *maya*. God is Life and Love and Health."

"I have put it somewhat differently," said Gandhiji. "God is Truth, which is the same thing as God is Life. And, then, I have said that Truth and Love are faces of the same coin, and Love is the means to find Truth which is the end." — *Harijan*, 29-1-1938

G.L.54

parents who have trifled with their children's diseases even to the extent of trusting them to their (the parents') recitation of Ramanama.

Lastly, the argument about everything, even medicines, being from *pancha mahabhutas* betrays a hasty confusion of thought. I have only to point it out to remove it.

Harijan, 28-4-1946

20

AYURVEDA AND NATURE CURE

I have no doubt whatsoever that the spread of Ramanama and pure living are the best and cheapest preventives of disease. The tragedy is that doctors, *hakims* and *vaidyas* do not make use of Ramanama as the sovereign of cures. There is no place given to it in current *ayurvedic* literature, except it be in the shape of a charm which will drive people further into the well of superstition. Ramanama has, in fact, no connection with superstition. It is Nature's supreme law. Whoever observes it, is free from disease and vice versa. The same law which keeps one free from disease, applies also to its cure. An apt question is as to why a man who recites Ramanama regularly and leads a pure life should ever fall ill. Man is by nature imperfect. A thoughtful man strives after perfection, but never attains it. He stumbles on the way, however, unwittingly. The whole of God's law is embodied in a pure life. The first thing is to realize one's limitations. It should be obvious that the moment one transgresses those limits, one falls ill. Thus, a balanced diet eaten in accordance with needs gives one freedom from disease. How is one to know what is the proper diet for one? Many such enigmas can be imagined. The purport of it all is that everyone should be his own doctor and find out his limitations. The man who does so will surely live up to 125.

Doctor friends claim that they do nothing more than investigating the laws and act accordingly and that, therefore, they are the best Nature Cure men. Everything can be explained away in this manner. All I want to say is that anything more than Ramanama is really contrary to true Nature Cure. The more one recedes from this central principle, the farther away one goes from Nature Cure. Following this line of thought, I limit Nature Cure to the use of the five elements. But a *vaidya* who goes beyond this and uses such herbs, as grow or can be grown in his neighbourhood, purely for service of the sick and not for money, may claim to be a Nature Cure man. But where are such *vaidyas* to be found ? Today most of them are engaged in making money. They do no research work and it is because of their greed and mental laziness that the science of *ayurveda* is at a low ebb.

Harijan, 19-5-1946

21
AT URULI KANCHAN

Gandhiji presented Ramanama to the village folk assembled at Uruli Kanchan as a natural Therapeutic No. 1 for the cure of bodily ailments : "In the song that we have just sung the devotee says, 'O Hari, You are the reliever of the people's distress.' The promise here is universal. It is not qualified or restricted to any particular kind of ailment." He told them of the conditions of success. The efficacy of Ramanama would depend on whether it was or was not backed by a living faith. "If you are subject to anger, eat and sleep for indulgence, not solely for sustenance, you do not know the meaning of Ramanama. Your recitation of it is mere lip service. Ramanama, to be efficacious, must absorb your entire being during its recitation and express itself in your whole life."

First Patients

Patients began to come in from the next morning. There were about thirty of them. Gandhiji examined five or six of them and prescribed to them all, more or less, the same treatment with slight variations, according to the nature of each case, i.e., recitation of Ramanama, sun bath, friction and hip baths, a simple eliminative diet of milk, buttermilk, fruit and fruit juices with plenty of clean fresh water to drink. "It has truly been observed," he explained at the evening prayer gathering, "that all mental and physical ailments are due to one common cause. It is, therefore, but natural that there should be a common remedy for them, too. There is a unity of cure, as there is in disease. The *Shastras* say so. Therefore, I prescribed Ramanama and almost the same treatment to all the patients who came to me this morning. But we have a knack of explaining away the *Shastras* in life, when they do not suit our convenience. We have deluded ourselves into the belief that the *Shastras* are meant only for the benefit of the soul in the life to come, that the end of *dharma* is to acquire merit after death. I do not share that view. If *dharma* has no practical use in this life, it has none for me in the next.

"There is hardly anyone in this world who is completely free from ailment whether bodily or mental. For some of these, there is no earthly cure. For instance, Ramanama cannot perform the miracle of restoring to you a lost limb. But it can perform the still greater miracle of helping you to enjoy an ineffable peace * in spite of the loss while you live, and rob death of its sting and the grave its victory at the journey's end. Since death must come soon or late to everyone, why should one worry over the time ?"

He then proceeded to give them his first discourse on Nature Cure principles. The following is its gist :

* There is no greater spell-binder of peace than the name of God. — *Press Report*, 10-1-1946.

Nature Cure Expounded

"Man's physical body is composed of five natural elements, i.e., air, water, earth, fire or *tejas* (the energizing principle) and ether (space). The soul quickens it.

"The most essential of these is air. Man can live without food for several weeks, without water for some time, but without air he cannot live for more than a few minutes. God has, therefore, made air universally available. Shortages of food or water there may be at times, but of air never. In spite of it, we foolishly deprive ourselves of God's blessing of fresh and pure air by sleeping within doors, with doors and windows shut. One may shut the doors and windows if he is afraid of thieves at night. But why should one shut oneself up?

"To get fresh air, one must sleep in the open. But it is no good sleeping in open only to breathe dust and dirt-laden air. The place where you sleep must be free from both. Some people cover their faces as a protection against dust and coal. It is a remedy worse than the disease. Then, there is the evil habit of breathing through the mouth. Mouth is the organ of ingestion. It is not the organ of breathing. The air passing through the nasal passages is filtered and purified and at the same time warmed up before it enters the lungs.

"Anyone who fouls the air by spitting about carelessly, throwing refuse and rubbish or otherwise dirtying the ground, sins against man and Nature. Man's body is the temple of God. Anyone who fouls the air that is to enter that temple desecrates it. He takes the name of Rama in vain."

Harijan, 7-4-1946

22

NATURE CURE IN KANCHANGAON

Nature Cure consists of two parts. Firstly, to cure diseases by taking the name of God or Ramanama ; and, secondly, to prevent illness by the inculcation of right and hygienic living. The report from the village says that the inhabitants are co-operating with them in keeping the village clean. I hold that where the rules of personal, domestic and public sanitation are strictly observed and due care is taken in the matter of diet and exercise, there should be no occasion for illness or disease. Where there is absolute purity, inner and outer, illness becomes impossible. If the village people could but understand this, they would not need doctors, *hakims* or *vaidyas*.

In Kanchangaon, there are hardly any cows. That is unfortunate. There are some she-buffaloes. But all the evidence that has come to me so far shows that buffalo's milk is no match for cow's in the health-giving quality. The *vaidyas* specially recommend cow's milk for patients. Milk is an absolute necessity for health.

Nature Cure implies an ideal mode of life and that, in its turn, presupposes ideal living conditions in towns and villages. The name of God is, of course, the hub round which the Nature Cure system revolves.

Harijan, 26-5-1946

23

NATURE CURE FOR THE POOR

Nature Cure means a change for the better in one's outlook on life itself. It means regulation of one's life in accordance with the laws of health. It is not a matter of taking free medicine from the hospital or for fees. A man who takes free treatment from the hospital accepts charity. The man who accepts Nature Cure never begs. Self-help enhances self-respect. He takes steps to cure himself by eliminating poisons from the system and takes precautions against falling ill in the future.

The central feature of Nature Cure treatment is Ramanama. But it must come from the heart, if it is to be a remedy for all one's ailments.

Right diet and balanced diet are necessary. Today our villages are as bankrupt as we are ourselves. To produce enough vegetables, fruits and milk in the villages, is an essential part of the Nature Cure scheme. Time spent on this should not be considered a waste. It is bound to benefit all the villagers and ultimately the whole of India.

Harijan, 2-6-1946

24

NATURE CURE AND MODERN TREATMENT

My Nature Cure is designed solely for villagers and villages. Therefore, there is no place in it for the microscope, X-rays and similar things. Nor is there room in Nature Cure for medicines, such as quinine, emetin and penicillin. Personal hygiene and healthy living are of primary importance. And these should suffice. If everyone could achieve perfection in this art, there could be no disease. And, while obeying all the laws of Nature in order to cure illness, if it does come, the sovereign remedy ever lies in Ramanama. But this cure through

Ramanama cannot become universal in the twinkling of an eye. To carry conviction to the patient, the physicion has to be a living embodiment of the power of Ramanama. Meantime, all that can possibly be had from the five agencies of Nature must be taken and used. They are earth, water, ether, fire and wind. This, to my mind, is the limit of Nature Cure. Therefore, my experiment in Uruli Kanchan consists in teaching the villagers, how to live clean and healthy lives and in trying to cure the sick through the proper use of the five agencies. If necessary, curative herbs that grow locally, may be used. Wholesome and balanced diet is, of course, an indispensable part of Nature Cure.

Harijan, 11-8-1946

25

LEARNING FROM EUROPE

The tendency of looking to the West in order to make progress in whatever we do, should be checked. If we have to go to the West to learn Nature Cure, it cannot be of much use to India. Nature Cure is a thing which everyone can practise in the home. The advice of Nature Cure experts should not be necessary for all time. It is such a simple thing that everyone can learn it. If we have to go to Europe to learn to recite Ramanama, it simply will not do. Ramanama is the very foundation of Nature Cure of my conception. Nor should it be necessary to go across the seas in order to learn the use of earth, water, ether, sun and air. This is self-evident. Whatever other knowledge is required in this direction can be had in our villages. For instance, if herbs are used, they must be village herbs. *Ayurveda* teachers know all about them. If some *ayurvedic* physicians are scoundrels, they cannot become good men and servants of the people by going abroad. The knowledge of anatomy and physiology has come from the West. It is very useful and necessary for all physicians. But there are plenty of

means of learning it in our own country. In short, whatever useful contribution to knowledge has been made by the West, it has reached everywhere and can be learnt everywhere. I might add here that the knowledge of anatomy and physiology is not essential for learning Nature Cure.

The writings of Kuhne, Just and Father Kneip, are simple, popular and useful for all. It is our duty to read them. Practically every Nature Cure physician knows something about them. Nature Cure has not been taken to the villages so far. We have not thought deeply and no one has thought of it in terms of the millions. This is just the beginning. No one can say where we shall stand in the end. As in all great and good enterprises, sacrifice and dedication are required to make this successful. Instead of looking up to the West, we should turn the searchlight inwards.

Harijan, 2-6-1946

26

LAWS OF NATURE

Q. I have been repeating Ramanama according to your advice and I am getting better. I must add that the medical treatment for tuberculosis is also being followed. You have said that eating little and eating the right food enables a man to be healthy and promotes longevity. I have observed the rule about eating sparely for the last twentyfive years. Why should I have fallen a prey to tuberculosis? Would you say, I should attribute this ill luck to some evil deed in this life or in the previous one?

You say a man can live up to 125 years. Then, why should God have carried away Mahadevbhai, who was so useful to you? He observed the rule of eating moderately and having a balanced diet and he served you as his God. Why did he fall a prey to high blood-pressure? Why did Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, who is looked upon as an

incarnation of God, fall a prey to cancer, as deadly a disease as tuberculosis? Why was he not able to fight it successfully?

A. I have been expounding the rules of maintaining health as I know them. Spare and balanced diet may not be the same for everybody. It can be best worked out by the individual for himself through proper reading and careful thought. But that does not mean that the individual cannot make mistakes or that his or her knowledge is complete. That is why life has been called a laboratory. One should learn from the experience of others and go forward and, if he is not successful, he should not blame others or even himself. One should not be too ready to find fault with the rule, but if after careful thought, one comes to the conclusion that a certain rule is wrong, he should be able to tell the right one and declare it.

So far as your own case is concerned, there may be several causes leading to your illness. Who can say whether you have made the right use of the five 'powers'* in your own case? So long as I believe in the laws of Nature as I know them, I have to say that you must have erred somewhere. As for Mahadev and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, to feel that even they must have erred somehow is fitter than to say that the laws are wrong. These rules are not my creation. They are the laws of Nature according to experienced men. I believe in them and try to live up to my belief. Man is after all an imperfect creature. How can he know the whole truth? That the allopathic doctors do not believe in them or, if they do, they do so in a different sense, does not impress me. What I have said, does not and should not in any way, detract from the greatness of the individuals mentioned.

Harijan, 4-8-1946

* Earth, water, ether, fire and wind.

27

FAITH CURE v. RAMANAMA

Here is fine banter from a friend :

> "I wonder whether this Nature Cure has any close relation to what is being called Faith Cure. Of course, one should have faith in treatment. But there are some exclusive Faith Cures, for example, smallpox, stomach pain, etc. For smllpox, as you might know, especially in the South, no treatment is given but it is considered Divine Play. We do *poojas* to Goddess Mariamma and it is almost miraculous to see most of the cases come out successful. For stomach pain, even chronic cases, many make vows before the deity at Thirupathi ; and finding themselves cured, fulfil their ablutions and other obligations. To give you a fitting example, my mother had the same pain and after her visit to Thirupathi, she is now free from that disease.
>
> "Will you kindly enlighten me on this and may I ask why people should not have such faith in Nature Cure also and save the recurring expenditure to the doctors who, as Chaucer said, maintain a fine conspiracy with the apothecary to keep a patient always a patient, which is part of the natural order of things."

The examples that have been quoted are neither Nature Cure, nor yet Ramanama which I have included in it. But they do show how Nature cures without any treatment in many cases. They are undoubtedly cases which show the part superstition plays in Indian life. Ramanama, which is the centre of Nature Cure, is the enemy of superstition. Unscrupulous men will abuse Ramanama as they will any other thing or system. Mere lip recitation of Ramanama has nothing to do with cure. Faith Cure, if I know it correctly, is blind cure such as the friend describes and thereby ridicules the living name of the living God. The latter is not a figment of one's imagination. It has to come from the heart. It is conscious belief in God and a knowledge of His Law that make perfect cure possible without any further aid. That Law is that a perfect mind is responsible for perfect health of the body. A perfect mind comes from a perfect heart, not the heart known by a doctor's stethoscope, but the

heart which is the seat of God. It is claimed that realization of God in the heart makes it impossible for an impure or an idle thought to cross the mind. Disease is impossible where there is purity of thought. Such a state may be difficult to attain. But the first step in the ascent to health is taken with its recognition. The next is taken when the corresponding attempt is made. This radical alteration in one's life is naturally accompanied by the observance of all other Nature's laws hitherto discovered by man. One cannot play with them and claim to have a pure heart. It can be said with justice that possession of a pure heart should do equally well without Ramanama. Only, I know no other way of attaining purity. And it is the way trodden by the sages of old all over the world. They were men of God, not superstitious men or charlatans.

If this is Christian Science, I have no quarrel with it. The way of Ramanama is not my discovery. It is probably much older than the Christian era.

A correspondent questions whether Ramanama avoids bona fide surgical operations. Of course, it does not. It cannot restore a leg that is cut off in an accident. In many cases surgical operations are unnecessary. Where they are required, they should be performed. But a man of God will not worry if a limb is lost. Recitation of Ramanama is neither an empirical method nor a makeshift.

Harijan, 9-6-1946

28
CONFUSION ABOUT RAMANAMA

A friend writes :

> "Regarding your suggested cure of malaria by Ramanama, my problem is that I do not understand how to rely on a spiritual force for my physical ailments. I am also not sure if I deserve to be cured and if am justified in praying for my salvation, when there is so much misery amongst my countrymen. The day I understand Ramanama, I shall pray for their salvation. Otherwise, I would feel more selfish than I do today."

This is from a friend whom I believe to be an earnest seeker of truth. I take public notice of his difficulty, as it is typical of that of many like him.

Spiritual force is like any other force at the service of man. Apart from the fact that it has been used for physical ailments for ages, with more or less success, it would be intrinsically wrong not to use it, if it can be successfully used for the cure of physical ailments. For, man is both matter and spirit, each acting on and affecting the other. If you get rid of malaria by taking quinine, without thinking of the millions who do not get it, why should you refuse to use the remedy which is within you, because millions will not use it through their ignorance ? May you not be clean and well because millions of others will not be so, ignorantly or, may be, even cussedly ? If you will not be clean out of false notions of philanthropy, you will deny yourself the duty of serving the very millions by remaining dirty and ill. Surely refusal to be spiritually well or clean is worse than the refusal to be physically clean and well.

Salvation is nothing more and nothing less than being well in every way. Why should you deny it for yourself, if thereby you show the way to others and beyond showing it, actually serve them in addition by reason of your fitness ? But you are wholly selfish, when you take penicillin in order to get well, although you have the certain knowledge that the others cannot get it.

The confusion lying behind my correspondent's argument is obvious.

What, however, is true is that the taking of a pill or pills of quinine is much easier than gaining the knowledge of the use of Ramanama. It involves much effort as against the mere cost of buying quinine pills. The effort is worth making for the sake of the millions, in whose name and on whose behalf my correspondent will shut Rama out of his heart.

Harijan, 1-9-1946

29

A HARD CASE

With reference to an Ashrama worker who got mentally deranged and became violent, and so had to be put in confinement, Gandhiji said :

" He is a fine worker. After his recovery last year, he looked after the garden and kept the hospital accounts. He worked diligently and was happy in his work. Then, he got malaria and was given a quinine injection because injection works quicker. He says the injection has gone to his head and is responsible for his mental affection. While I was working in my room this morning, I found him wandering to and fro outside, shouting and gesticulating. I went out to him and walked with him. He was quieted. But the moment I left him, he became uncontrollable again. He gets violent, too, and listens to no one. So, he had to be sent to jail.

" It has naturally hurt me to think that one of our workers should be sent to jail. I may be asked : 'What about your Ramanama which you have claimed to be a cure-all ? ' Even in the face of this failure, let me reiterate that my faith remains intact. Ramanama can never fail. The failure only means a lack in us. We must seek the cause of failure within us."

Harijan, 1-9-1946

30

TOWARDS REALIZATION

What is the mark of him who has Rama enthroned in his heart? If we do not know this, there is danger of Ramanama being much misinterpreted. Some misinterpretation is already in existence. Many sport rosaries and put the sacred mark on the forehead and vainly babble His name. It may well be asked whether I am not adding to the current hypocrisy by continued insistence on Ramanama. I must not be deterred by such forbodings. Silence thus brought about is harmful. The living voice of silence needs to be backed by prolonged heartfelt practice. In the absence of such natural silence, we must try to know the marks of him who has Rama in his heart.

A devotee of Rama may be said to be the same as the steadfast one (*sthitapragnya*) of the *Gita*. If one goes a little deeper it will be seen that a true devotee of God faithfully obeys the five elemental forces of Nature. If he so obeys, he will not fall ill. If perchance he does, he will cure himself with the aid of the elements. It is not for the dweller in the body to get the body cured anyhow — he who believes that he is nothing but body will naturally wander to the ends of the earth in order to cure the body of its ills. But he who realizes that the soul is something apart from, though in the body, that it is imperishable in contrast to the perishable body, will not be perturbed nor mourn if the elements fail. On the contrary he will welcome death as a friend. He will become his own healer instead of seeking for medical men. He will live in the consciousness of the soul within and look to the care, first and last, of the indweller.

Such a man will take God's name with every breath. His Rama will be awake even whilst the body is asleep. Rama will always be with him in whatever he does. The real death for such a devoted man will be the loss of this sacred companionship.

As an aid to keeping his Rama with him, he will take what the five elements have to give him. That is to say he will employ the simplest and easiest way of deriving all the benefit he can from earth, air, water, sunlight and ether. This aid is not complementary to Ramanama. It is but a means of its realization. Ramanama does not in fact require any aid. But to claim belief in Ramanama and at the same time to run to doctors do not go hand in hand.

A friend versed in religious lore who read my remarks on Ramanama sometime ago wrote to say that Ramanama is an alchemy such as can transform the body. The conservation of the vital energy has been likened to accumulated wealth, but it is in the power of Ramanama alone to make it a running stream of ever-increasing spiritual strength ultimately making a fall impossible.

Just as the body cannot exist without blood, so the soul needs the matchless and pure strength of faith. This strength can renovate the weakness of all man's physical organs. That is why it is said that when Ramanama is enshrined in the heart, it means the rebirth of man. This law applies to the young, the old, man and woman alike.

This belief is to be found in the West too. Christian Sciences give a glimpse of it. But India needs no outside support for a belief which has been handed down to her people from time immemorial.

Hardwar, 21-6-'47

Harijan, 29-6-1947

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
27 SEP 1955
T. KALLUPATTI

31

FROM AFTER-PRAYER DISCOURSES

Ramanama — Its Laws and Its Discipline

Ramanama, said Gandhiji, could help a man in ill health, but it had its laws and its discipline. No one could gourmandize, say " Rama Rama " and blame Gandhi if he got stomach-ache. Ramanama had its proper uses. No man could utter Ramanama, indulge in looting and hope to attain salvation. It was only for those who were prepared to observe proper discipline for the sake of self-purification.

— Bombay : 15-3-'46

Most Effective Remedy

Addressing the prayer meeting at Uruli Kanchan, Gandhiji said that Ramadhun was the most effective remedy for physical and mental ailments, and that no doctor or *vaidya* could promise cure by medicine. " But," he added, " God will certainly relieve you of your pains and worries if you pray to Him." But for the prayer to be effective, one must participate in Ramadhun whole-heartedly and then only one would feel peace and happiness.

There were other conditions also which one had to fulfil. One must take proper food, have sufficient sleep and not give vent to one's anger. Above all, one must live in harmony with Nature and follow its principles.

— Poona : 22-3-'46

Preparation Needed

Addressing the gathering after prayers, Gandhiji related that honest men and women had said to him that with all their efforts they could not say that Ramanama came to them from the heart. His reply to them was that they must go on and have infinite patience. A boy required at least 16 years' hard study in order to become a doctor. How much more time must be necessary to establish Ramanama in the heart !

— New Delhi : 20-4-'46

Purity Inner and Outer

A man who repeated Ramanama and thereby cleansed his inner being could not tolerate the filth outside. If millions took to Ramanama in real earnest, there would be no riots, which were a social malady, and there would be no illness. The Kingdom of Heaven would come on earth.

— New Delhi : 21-4-'46

Misuse of Ramanama

In his after-prayer discourse, Gandhiji again dwelt on the subject of Nature Cure or the cure of ailments spiritual, mental and physical, by the application principally of Ramanama. A correspondent had written to him, pointing out how some people superstitiously wrote Ramanama on their clothes so as to wear it 'next to the heart'! Others wrote Ramanama millions of times minutely on a piece of paper which they afterwards cut up into small bits and swallowed so that they could claim that Ramanama had entered into them! There were people who thought that he was self-deluded and was trying to delude others by adding one more to the thousands of superstitions which filled this superstition-ridden land. He had no answer to such criticism. He only said to himself, what did it matter if truth was abused and fraud practised in its name by others? So long as he was sure of his truth, he could not help proclaiming it for fear of its being misunderstood or abused. "Nobody in this world possesses absolute truth. This is God's attribute alone. Relative truth is all we know. Therefore, we can only follow the truth as we see it. Such pursuit of truth cannot lead anyone astray."

— New Delhi : 24-5-'46

How to Recite Ramanama

Gandhiji in today's discourse explained the conditions under which alone Ramanama could become an effective remedy. The first condition was that it should come from the heart. What did that mean? People did not mind going to the ends of the earth to find a cure for

their physical ailments, which were much less important than the mental or spiritual. "Man's physical being is after all perishable. It cannot, by its very nature, last for ever. And yet men make a fetish of it while neglecting the immortal spirit within." A man who believed in Ramanama would not make a fetish of the body, but would regard it only as a means of serving God. And for making it into a fit instrument for that purpose, Ramanama was the sovereign means.

To install Ramanama in the heart required infinite patience. It might even take ages. But the effort was worthwhile. Even so, success depended solely on the grace of God.

Ramanama could not come from the heart unless one had cultivated the virtues of truth, honesty and purity within and without. Every day at the evening prayers, they repeated the *shlokas* describing the man with a steadfast intellect. Every one of them, said Gandhiji, could become a *sthitapragnya* — man with steadfast intellect — if he kept his senses under discipline, ate and drank and allowed himself enjoyment and recreation only to sustain life for service. If one had no control over one's thoughts, if one did not mind, for instance, sleeping in a hole of a room with all doors and windows shut, and breathing foul air or drinking dirty water, his recitation of Ramanama was in vain.

That, however, did not mean that one should give up reciting Ramanama on the ground that one had not the requisite purity. For, recitation of Ramanama was also a means for acquiring purity. "In the case of a man who repeats Ramanama from the heart, discipline and self-control will come easy. Observance of the rules of health and hygiene will become his second nature. His life will run an even course. He will never want to hurt any one. To suffer in order to relieve other's suffering will become a part of his being and fill him with an ineffable and perennial joy." Let them, therefore, said Gandhiji, persevere and ceaselessly repeat Ramanama during all their

waking hours. Ultimately, it would remain with them even during their sleep and God's grace would then fill them with perfect health of body, mind and spirit.

— New Delhi : 25-5-'46

Potency of Silent Thought

In his discourse after the prayer today, Gandhiji said that they had been coming to the prayer gathering daily in order to join him in chanting Ramanama or rather in learning how to do so. Ramanama, however, could not be taught by word of mouth. But he held that even more potent than the spoken word was the silent thought. A single right thought could envelop the world. It was never wasted. The very attempt to clothe thought in word or action limited it. No man in this world could express a thought in word or action fully.

"That does not mean," proceeded Gandhiji, "that one should go into perpetual silence." In theory, that was possible. But it was very difficult to fulfil the condition by which silent thought could be made effective. He for one could not claim to have attained the requisite intensity or control over thought. He could not altogether keep out useless or irrelevant thoughts from his mind. It required infinite patience and *tapasya* to attain that state.

He was not indulging in a figure of speech, but he meant it literally when he told them on the previous day that there was no limit to the potency of Ramanama. But in order to experience that, Ramanama had to come from a heart that was absolutely pure. He himself was striving to attain that state. He had envisaged it in the mind, but had not fully realized it in practice. When that stage was reached, even the recitation of Ramanama would become unnecessary.*

He hoped they would continue to recite Ramanama in their homes severally and in company during his absence. The secret of collective prayers was that the

* I do look forward to a time when even repeating the name of Rama will become a hindrance. When I have realized that Rama transcends even speech, I shall have no need to repeat the name.
— *Young India*, 14-8-'24

emanation of silent influence from one another would help them in the realization of their goal.

— New Delhi : 26-5-'46

No Charm Like Ramanama

Speaking at the prayer meeting today, Gandhiji gave the healing message of Ramanama and said : "Ramanama is not for the few : it is for all. He who takes this name lays by a rich store for himself, and it is inexhaustible. The more you draw upon it, the more it increases. It is infinite. As the *Upanishad* says, you take out infinite out of infinite and infinite remains behind. It is the unfailing panacea for all ills.

"But the condition is that it must come from the heart. Do evil thoughts possess you, or are you tormented by lust or greed ? Then, there is no charm against it like Ramanama." And he illustrated his meaning by a parable. "Supposing you are tempted to amass a big fortune by some easy and dishonest means. If you have faith in Ramanama, you will say to yourself : 'Why should I amass for my wife and children riches which they might squander away — why not leave them a legacy in the shape of sound character and sound education and training that will enable them to earn their living by honest industry and body labour ?' Ceaseless repetition of Ramanama will dispel your delusion and false attachment and the living realization will dawn on you that you were a fool to hanker after millions for the sake of your dear ones, instead of offering them the priceless treasure of His name which frees one from all bondage and wandering. Filled with the joy of that realization, such a person will tell his wife and children : 'I have not brought for you the treasure I had set out for, but something infinitely richer.' 'Where is it, show it to us ?' they will say incredulously. 'It is the Name which is richer than all treasures,' he will reply, 'because It quenches the thirst for all riches. It is enshrined in my heart.' "

— Mussoorie : 2-6-'46

Essence of All Prayers

In his speech after the evening prayers, Gandhiji said that he expected them to offer prayers in their own homes regularly morning and evening. There was no need for them to learn Sanskrit *shlokas.* if they did not wish to. Ramadhun was enough. The essence of all prayers was to establish God in their hearts. If they succeeded in doing that, all would be well with them, with society and the world.

— Mussoorie : 8-6-'46

Sheer Hypocrisy

To repeat Ramanama and to follow the way of Ravana in actual practice was worse than useless. It was sheer hypocrisy. One might deceive oneself or the world, but one could not deceive the Almighty.

— New Delhi : 18-6-'46

Ambrosia of God's Name

Commenting upon Mirabai's song which was sung at the prayer, Gandhiji said that in that song the devotee asks the soul to drink deep of the nectar of God's name. Physical food and drink result in satiety, and, if over-indulged, in illness. But the ambrosia of God's name knows no such limit. The deeper one drinks of it, the more the thirst for it grows, but it must sink deep into the heart. When that happens, all delusion and attachment, lust and envy, fall off from us. Only one must persevere and have patience. Success is the inevitable result of such effort.

— New Delhi : 18-6-'46

Miracles That Faith Works

A man of prayer must know no disappointment because he knows that the times are in His hands who is the Arch Planner, and does everything in His good time. A man of prayer, therefore, waits in faith and patience always.

In the allegory of *Gajendra* and *Graha*, Gandhiji went on to explain, the elephant king was seized unawares

by the crocodile as he went to have a drink of water in the river and was dragged down. The more he struggled, the deeper he sank. A stage was, however, reached when despairing of his physical prowess, he threw himself on God's grace entirely and invoked His aid, and the Lord of Dwaraka came in the twinkling of an eye and rescued him.

"The moral of the story," said Gandhiji, "is that God never fails His devotees in the hour of trial. The condition is that there must be a living faith and the uttermost reliance on Him. The test of faith is that having done our duty we must be prepared to welcome whatever He may send — joy as well as sorrow, good luck as well as bad luck. He will be like King Janaka who, when informed that his capital was ablaze, only remarked that it was no concern of his."

The secret of his resignation and equanimity, remarked Gandhiji, was that he was ever awake, never remiss in the performance of his duty. Having done his duty, he would leave the rest to God.

"And so a man of prayer will in the first place be spared mishaps by the ever merciful Providence, but if the mishaps do come, he will not bewail his fate nor lay the blame on God, but bear them with an undisturbed peace of mind and joyous resignation to His will."

— New Delhi : 20-6-'46

Significance of Ramanama

Explaining the significance of Ramanama to the prayer gathering this evening, Gandhiji said: "God is not a person. He is the all-pervading, all-powerful spirit. Anyone who bears Him in his or her heart has accession of a marvellous force or energy as objective in its results as, say electricity, but much subtler."

"Was he propagating a species of superstition?" he asked. "No," was his reply. "Mere repetition of Ramanama possessed no mysterious virtue as such. Ramanama was not like black magic. It had to be taken with all that it symbolized. Rather, it was like a mathematical formula

which summed up in brief the result of endless research. Mere mechanical repetition of Ramanama could not give strength. For that, one had to understand and live up to the conditions attaching to its recitation. To take God's name, one had to live a godly life."

— Poona : 2-7-'46

Inner and Outer Cleanliness

In the course of his discourse to the prayer gathering today, Gandhiji referred, among other things, to the filthy surroundings in which the Harijan quarters were located and in which he had taken his abode. He had been wondering why those in charge of sanitation, that is the Municipality and the P. W. D., should put up with that filth. What was the use of his going and staying there, if it could not induce them to make the place healthy and hygienic?

What was the connection between all that and the prayer? A man who did not observe the rules of external cleanliness could not pray for internal cleanliness. If the object of their attending prayer was idle curiosity, they had committed a sin by coming. If they had come to join in the prayer, they must pray for inner and outer cleanliness. To say one thing and to do something different would be deception. No one could deceive God, because He was omnipresent and omniscient.

There was so much dirt and filth about the place. Dr. Dinshah had told him that the lavatories were so dirty that he could not use them. There were so many flies about the place that he was anxious that he (Gandhiji) might catch some infection and get killed. He himself was not worried about that. Although the two doctors with him looked after him, he did not depend on any one except God. The Almighty would take care of his health. But his companions did not have that faith in God.

— Bombay : 6-7-'46

The Sovereign Remedy

In his after-prayer speech Gandhiji referred to several letters and messages from friends expressing concern

over his persistent cough. His speech was broadcast and so was the cough which was often troublesome in the evening and in the open. For the last four days, however, the cough had been on the whole less troublesome and he hoped it would soon disappear completely. The reason for the persistence of the cough had been that he had refused all medical treatment. Dr. Shushila had said that if at the outset he had taken penicillin he would have been all right in three days. Otherwise, it would take him three weeks to get over it. He did not doubt the efficacy of penicillin but he believed too that Ramanama was the sovereign remedy for all ills and, therefore, superseded all other remedies. In the midst of the flames that surrounded him on all sides, there was all the greater need for a burning faith in God. God alone could enable people to put down the fire. If He had to take work from Gandhiji, He would keep him alive; otherwise He would carry him away.

They had just heard the *bhajan* in which the poet had exhorted man to stick to Ramanama. He alone was the refuge of man. Therefore, in the present crisis he wished to throw himself entirely on God and not accept medical aid for a physical ailment.

— New Delhi : 18-10-'47

32
A THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

To fall ill should be a matter of shame for anyone. Illness implies some error or other. He whose body and mind are perfectly sound, should never suffer from illness.

— Sevagram : 26-12-'44

An evil thought is also an indication of illness. Therefore, we should guard ourselves against evil thoughts.

— Sevagram : 27-12-'44

An infallible remedy for evil thoughts is Ramanama. The name should proceed not merely from the lips, but from the heart.

— Sevagram : 28-12-'44

Diseases are numerous, so also are the physicians and their treatments. If we regard all disease as one and consider Rama as the one and only physician, we are freed from most of our troubles.

— Sevagram : 29-12-'44

How strange that we should be running after *vaidyas* and doctors who themselves die, but quietly forget Rama who is eternal and is an unfailing *vaidya*!

— Sevagram : 30-12-'44

But more strange than this is the fact that though we know that we too have to die one day, and that as a result of doctors' treatment we can at best prolong our existence by a few days more, we put ourselves to no end of trouble.

— Sevagram : 31-12-'44

The young and the old, the rich and the poor — all die before our very eyes; still we will not sit at rest but do all that we can, except relying on Rama, just to live a few days longer.

— Sevagram : 1-1-'45

What a fine thing would it be if we understood this and placing our reliance on Rama patiently put up with whatever ailment came our way and lived in real peace!

— Sevagram : 2-1-'45

If a man regarded as religious is suffering from illness, it means that something or other is lacking in him.

— Sevagram : 22-4-'45

If a man's mind remains impure in spite of himself, Ramanama should be his sole support.

— On Nearing Madras : 21-1-'46

The more I think the more I realize that Ramanama recited from heart and with knowledge is a cure-all for every kind of disease.

— Uruli : 22-3-'46

Attachment, hatred, etc., are also diseases and worse than the physical ones. But for Ramanama, there is no cure for them.

— Uruli : 23-3-'46

Uncleanliness of mind is more dangerous than that of the body ; the outer uncleanliness is, however, but an indication of the inner one.

— Uruli : 24-3-'46

Who can describe the joy and happiness that one experiences by taking shelter in God ?

— Uruli : 25-3-'46

Ramanama is helpful to those who fulfil the conditions of its recitation.

— New Delhi : 8-4-'46

Repetition of Ramanama becomes in vain if no corresponding service worthy of Rama is rendered.

— New Delhi : 21-4-'46

The fear of illness accounts for more deaths than the illness itself.

— Simla : 7-5-'46

For the cure of threefold malady, Ramanama is a sure remedy.

— New Delhi : 24-5-'46

He who seeks refuge in Ramanama obtains the satisfaction of all his desires.

— New Delhi : 25-5-'46

If one wants to drink the nectar of Ramanama, it is but necessary that one should drive out lust, anger, etc.

— New Delhi : 20-6-'46

When all is well, then, of course, everyone takes the name of God ; but a true devotee is he who remembers God when all goes awry.

— Bombay : 6-7-'46

The elixir of Ramanama imparts joy to the soul and rids the body of its ailment.

— Poona : 9-7-'46

33

TWO LETTERS

Yeravda Mandir,
Nov. 12, 1930

Dear............

For the health of your body you should take sitz and sun baths. And for the peace of mind, Ramanama is the best balm. Restrain yourself when any passion troubles you. There is only one way of walking in the light of God and that is to serve His creation. Indeed, there is no other meaning of God's grace or light.

BAPU'S BLESSINGS

II

Sevagram,
Jan. 9, 1945

Dear............

Your letter. Whether you get well or not — what does it matter ? The more reliance we place on God, the more peace of mind shall we have. *Vaidyas* and doctors are there, of course ; but they take us farther away from God. That's why I preferred to send you there. Nature Cure treatment brings us nearer to God. I will have no objection whatever if we could do even without it. But why be afraid of fast or avoid pure air ? The meaning of

Nature Cure is to go nearer Nature — God. Let us see how far I succeed in this. I will certainly not overstrain myself.

BAPU'S BLESSINGS

34

QUESTION BOX

Vocal Recitation

Q. While in conversation or doing brain work or when one is suddenly worried, can one recite Ramanama (the name of God) in one's heart? Do people do so at such times, and if so, how?

A. Experience shows that man can do so at any time, even in sleep, provided Ramanama is enshrined in his heart. If the taking of the name has become a habit, its recitation through the heart becomes as natural as the heart beat. Otherwise, Ramanama is a mere mechanical performance, or, at best, has touched the heart only on the surface. When Ramanama has established its dominion over the heart, the question of vocal recitation does not arise. Because, then, it transcends speech. But it may well be held that persons who have attained this state are few and far between.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Ramanama contains all the power that is attributed to it. No one can, by mere wishing, enshrine Ramanama in his heart. Untiring effort is required as also patience. What an amount of labour and patience have been lavished by men to acquire the non-existent philosopher's stone? Surely, God's name is of infinitely richer value and always existent.

Service or the Rosary?

Q. Is it harmful if, owing to stress or exigencies of work, one is unable to carry out daily devotions in the prescribed manner? Which of the two should be given preference — service or the rosary?

A. Whatever the exigencies of service or adverse circumstances may be, Ramanama must not cease. The outward form will vary according to the occasion. The absence of the rosary does not interrupt Ramanama which has found an abiding place in the heart.

Ramanama

Q. Is it not enough to have Ramanama in one's heart, or is there something special in its recitation?

A. I believe there is special merit in the recitation of Ramanama. If anyone knows that God is in truth residing in his heart, I admit that for him there is no need for recitation. But I have not known such a person. On the contrary, my personal experience tells me that there is something quite extraordinary in the recitation of Ramanama. Why or how is not necessary to know.

ADDENDUM

I

WHO IS THIS RAMA ?

Gandhiji reiterated that Rama whose name he prescribed as the infallible remedy for all ills was neither the historical Rama nor the Rama of those who used the name as a charm or black magic. Rama whose name he prescribed as a cure-all was God, by taking whose name devotees attained purity and peace, and he claimed that it was the one infallible remedy for all ailments whether mental, spiritual or physical. It was, of course, possible to cure physical ailments by going to doctors and *vaidyas*. But Ramanama enabled one to become one's own doctor or *vaidya* and to find the elixir of healing within oneself. Even when the ailment could not be cured, because physically it was incurable, it enabled one to endure it with equanimity and peace of mind. " A person who has faith in Ramanama would not run from pillar to post and dance attendance at the doors of celebrated doctors and *vaidyas* in order to prolong existence anyhow. Nor is Ramanama meant to be taken only when the doctors and *vaidyas* have failed. It is meant to enable one to do without them altogether. For a believer in Ramanama it is the first as well as the last remedy."

Harijan, 2-6-1946

II

THE ALL-HEALING BALM

" The greatest help you can give me is to banish fear from your hearts," Gandhiji told them. And what was the talisman that could do that for them ? It was his unfailing *mantra* of Ramanama. " You may say you do not believe in Him. You do not know that but for His will you could

not draw a single breath. Call Him Ishwara, Allaha, God, Ahura Mazda. His names are as innumerable as there are men. He is one without a second. He alone is great. There is none greater than He. He is timeless, formless, stainless. Such is my Rama. He alone is my Lord and Master."

He touchingly described to them how as a little boy he used to be usually timid and afraid of even shadows and how his nurse Rambha had taught him the secret of Ramanama as an antidote to fear. "When in fear take Ramanama. He will protect you," she used to tell him. Ever since then Ramanama has been his unfailing refuge and shelter from all kinds of fear.

"He resided in the heart of the pure always. Tulsidas, that prince of devotees, whose name has become a household word among the Hindus from Kashmir to Cape Comorin as Shri Chaitanya's and Shri Ramkrishna Paramahansa's in Bengal, has presented the message of that name to us in his immortal *Ramayana*. If you walk in fear of that name, you need fear no man on earth, be he a prince or a pauper." Why should they be afraid of the cry of 'Allaho Akbar'? The Allah of Islam was the protector of innocence. What had been done in East Bengal had not the sanction of Islam as preached by its Prophet.

Who could dare to dishonour their wives or daughters, if they had faith in God? He, therefore, expected them to cease to be afraid of Mussulmans. If they believed in Ramanama they must not think of leaving East Bengal. They must live where they were born and brought up and die there if necessary, defending their honour as brave men and women. "To run away from danger, instead of facing it, is to deny one's faith in man and God and even one's own self. It were better for one to drown oneself than to live to declare such bankruptcy of faith."

Harijan, 24-11-1946

III

ACCEPT SLAVERY OF ONE GOD

Gandhiji asked them to accept the slavery of the one Omnipotent God no matter by what name they addressed Him. Then they would bend the knee to no man or men. It was ignorance to say that he coupled Rama, a mere man, with God. He had repeatedly made it clear that his Rama was the same as God. His Rama was before, is present now and would be for all time. He was Unborn and Uncreated. Therefore, let them tolerate and respect the different faiths. He was himself an iconoclast but he had equal regard for the so-called idolaters. Those who worshipped idols also worshipped the same God who was everywhere, even in a clod of earth, even in a nail that was pared off. He had Muslim friends whose names were Rahim, Rahman, Karim. Would he therefore join on to the name of God when he addressed them as Rahim, Karim, or Rahman ?

Harijan, 23-2-1947

IV

TOLERATION

Questions poured in as did angry letters. Why did he call himself a Muslim ? Why did he consider that there was no difference between Rama and Rahim ? Why had he gone so far as to say that he had no objection to reciting the *Kalma* ? Why did he not go to the Punjab ? Was he not a bad Hindu ? Was he not a fifth-columnist ? Was not his non-violence making cowards of Hindus ? One envelope came to him addressed as Mahomed Gandhi !

Quietly and patiently, Gandhiji reasoned with them. Why should and how could Islam be condemned for the sins of a few ? He claimed to be a *sanatani* Hindu and because the essence of Hinduism, and indeed of all religions,

was toleration, he claimed that if he was a good Hindu, he was also a good Muslim and a good Christian. It was against the spirit of religion to claim superiority. Humility was essential to non-violence. Had not the Hindu scriptures said that God had a thousand names? Why may not Rahim be one of them? The *Kalma* merely praised God and acknowledged Mohamed as His Prophet. He had no hesitation in praising God and acknowledging Mohamed as a Prophet in the same way as he acknowledged Buddha and Zoroaster and Jesus.

Harijan, 27-4-1947

V

MEDICINE FOR THE MASSES

You will be pleased to know that I became a confirmed convert to Nature Cure, when I read Kuhne's *New Science of Healing* and Just's *Return to Nature* over forty years ago. I must confess that I have not been able fully to follow the meaning of *Return to Nature* not because of want of will but because of my ignorance. I am now trying to evolve a system of Nature Cure suited to the millions of India's poor. I try to confine myself to the propagation of such cure as is derivable from the use of earth, water, light, air and the great void. This naturally leads man to know that the sovereign cure of all ills is the recitation from the heart of the name of God whom some millions here know by the name of Rama and the other millions by the name of Allah. Such recitation from the heart carries with it the obligation to recognize and follow the laws which Nature has ordained for man. This train of reasoning leads one to the conclusion that prevention is better than cure. Therefore, one is irresistibly driven to inculcating the laws of hygiene, i. e., of cleanliness of the mind, of the body and of its surroundings.

Harijan, 15-6-1947

VI

RAMADHUN

Gandhiji said that those who had some experience knew the power that the Ramadhun, meaning recital of God's name from the heart, meant. He knew the power that *lakhs* of soldiers marching in step to the tune of their band meant. The desolation that the military prowess had wrought in the world, he who ran could see. Though the war was said to have ended, the aftermath was worse than actual warfare. Such was the bankruptcy of military power.

Without the slightest hesitation he was there to contend that the power exerted by the Ramadhun recited by millions of mankind with true beat of time, was different in kind from and infinitely superior to the display of military strength. And this recital of God's name from the heart, would produce lasting peace and happiness in the place of the present desolation, they witnessed.

Harijan, 31-8-1947

VII

REAL ILLUMINATION

Today alas ! there was no *Ramarajya* in India ; therefore, how could they celebrate *Diwali?* He alone could celebrate victory who had Rama in his heart for it was God alone who could illumine their souls and such illumination alone was worth while. The *bhajan* emphasized the writer's desire to see God. Crowds went to see man-made illuminations but the light they needed today was the light of love in their hearts. Then alone would they be worthy of receiving congratulations. Today thousands were in the most dire suffering. Could every one in the audience lay his hand on his heart and say that every one of these sufferers, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, was as

his own brother or sister? That was the test for them. Rama and Ravana represented the eternal duel going on between the forces of good and evil. The real illumination came from within.

Harijan, 23-11-1947

VIII

THE DAY BEFORE

[Shri K. G. Mashruwala received on the 2nd instant a post-card written by Gandhiji himself on the 29th January, that is, the day before his death. It refers to a letter written by Shri Mashruwala to one of Gandhiji's assistants to acknowledge receipt of a communication from him. The reply, therefore, by Gandhiji himself has come to him as an agreeable surprise and a precious memento. The following is a free translation of the post-card. — Editor, *Harijan*]

"29-1-'48, N. D.

" My dear Kishorlal,

" I have been devoting today my time after the prayer in writing letters. You did well in sending here the news of the death of Shankaranji's daughter. I have sent him a letter. The report of my going there (i.e. Sevagram) must be regarded still as indefinite. I have suggested that I should stay there from the 3rd to the 12th. If it could be said that I "did" in Delhi, it might not be necessary to be here for keeping my pledge. This depends upon what view my colleagues here take. Perhaps it may be possible to decide tomorrow. The purpose of my visit is to consider whether it is possible to unite together all the separate institutions of the Constructive Programme and to observe the anniversary day of Jamnalal. I have been gaining strength satisfactorily. Both the kidney and the liver got involved this time. According to my view, it showed weakness of faith in Ramanama.

" Blessings to both of you."

[Notes: Shri Shankaranji is a teacher in the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Sevagram.

The verb "did" is in reference to the pledge "Do or Die", which he took on reaching Delhi.

The other person referred to in "blessings to both" is Shrimati Gomatibehn Mashruwala.]

Harijan, 8-2-1948

IX

"RAMA! RAMA!"

As Gandhiji passed through the cordoned lane through the prayer congregation, he took his hands off the shoulders of the two girls to answer the *namaskars* of the prayer congregation. All of a sudden some one from the crowd roughly elbowed his way into the cordon from the right. Little Manu thinking that he was coming forward to touch his feet, remonstrated saying something about it being already late for the prayer and tried to stop the intruder by holding his hand. He violently jerked her off, causing the *Ashram Bhajanavali* and Bapu's spittoon and *mala*, which she was carrying in her hands, to fall down. As she stooped down to pick up the scattered things, he planted himself in front of Bapu at less than point blank range — so close, indeed, that one of the ejected shells was afterwards found caught among the folds of Bapu's clothes. Three shots rang out in quick succession from the seven-chambered automatic pistol, the first shot entering the abdomen on the right side two and a half inches above the umbilicus and three and a half inches to the right of the mid line, the second penetrating the seventh intercostal space one inch to the right of the mid line and the third on the right side of the chest one inch above the nipple and four inches from the mid line. The first and the second shots passed right through and came out at the back. The third remained embedded in the lung. At the first shot the foot that was in motion, when he was hit, came down. He still stood on his legs when the second shot rang out and then collapsed. The last words he uttered were "Rama Rama".

Harijan, 15-2-1948

X
RAMANAMA

At Amki I could not get goat's milk for Bapu. I tried my best to procure it but failed. So I had to inform Bapu who said to me, "What does it matter? For goat's milk the white juice of the coconut will do as well and fresh coconut oil will serve the purpose of ghee."

Bapu showed me how to prepare them and accordingly I gave them to him. As he usually took eight ounces of goat's milk he took the same quantity of coconut milk too. But he could not digest it and so had an attack of diarrhoea. The frequent motions made him weaker and weaker till in the evening when he was coming back to the hut he felt a reeling sensation and was about to fall. Generally symptoms like yawning, perspiration, coldness of hands and feet etc. would precede such a reeling sensation in his case. I thought from his yawns that he was about to feel giddy but I was mistaken. Bapu who was walking with my support was already collapsing. I held his head with care and shouted for Nirmalbabu. He came and we both helped Bapuji to bed. Then it struck me that I should call for Dr. Sushilabehn who was in a village near-by. I feared that I would be taken for a fool if Bapuji's illness suddenly took a serious turn and if I did not call for her in time. I wrote a chit and just as I was giving it to Nirmalbabu for despatching, Bapu woke up from his trance and called out, "Manudi" (that was Bapu's term of endearment for me), "I do not like your calling Nirmalbabu. As you are still young, however, I can excuse you. But at such a time I expect you to do nothing else but take Ramanama with all your heart. As for myself I was already engrossed in taking His name. I would have liked it immensely had you started taking Ramanama instead of shouting for Nirmalbabu. Now

don't inform Sushila or call her. The real doctor is Rama. As long as Rama needs service from me, He will keep me alive. When He does not, He will call me back to Himself."

A shiver passed through my body when the words "don't inform Sushila or call her" struck my ears. I snatched the chit from Nirmalbabu and tore it to pieces. Bapu saw this and remarked, "So you had already written to her." I had to admit the fact. Then he said, "Today the Lord has saved us both. On reading the chit Sushila would have left her work and immediately run to us. I would not have liked it at all. That would have made me angry with myself and you. Thank God I was tested today. I am convinced that I shall not die of sickness if Ramanama has penetrated deep down into my heart. This rule is for everybody. One has to suffer for one's mistakes and in that spirit I passed through the pain. One should have Ramanama on one's lips till one's last breath but it should not be repeated parrot-like; it should spring from the heart as was the case with Hanuman. When Sitaji presented a pearl necklace to him he broke the pearls to see if the name of Rama was written in them. We need not care to find out whether the incident actually happened or not. We may not be able to make our bodies as strong as that of Hanuman but we can certainly make our souls as great. One can realize the devotion of Hanuman if one is intent on it. If one cannot reach that height it is enough if one makes a sincere attempt. Has not Mother *Gita* taught us to make every effort and leave the result in the hands of God? We should try our very best to follow that teaching.

"Now you have understood what my attitude is towards the sickness of anybody, be it you, me or any one else." And that very day he wrote to an ailing sister: "There is only one panacea in the whole world and that is Ramanama. But His name could only prove effective if the rules pertaining to it are strictly adhered to. But who cares to do so?"

Strangely enough the above incident occurred on the 30th January 1947, exactly a year before his death.

That unshakable faith in Ramanama remained with him till his last breath. I did not then imagine that on the same day a year later I should have the heart-rending experience of hearing *Rama, Ra . . . . ma* as the last audible words of the great departing soul. Mysterious indeed are the ways of the Lord !

From *Bapu—My Mother*

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
27 SEP 1955
T. KALLUPATTI

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